

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

The Career Perceptions of Educational Psychology Students and Professionals

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Educational Psychology

at Massey University, Albany,

New Zealand

Jacqueline N. Seymour

2016

### Abstract

Contemporary career literature indicates that careers are becoming less traditional. Two new careers concepts are that of the boundaryless and protean career orientations. Career adaptability is also essential for individuals to maintain personal flexibility and the ability to cope. The current study used an online survey to investigate whether or not these new concepts of career applied to educational psychology students and practicing educational psychologists. Quantitative results from the survey indicated that both students and professionals held boundaryless and protean attitudes. Late-career psychologists and psychologists working outside the Ministry of Education held more boundaryless attitudes. A high degree of career adaptability was also found, especially in terms of career agency, and with students reporting higher levels of perceived support than did professionals. Quantitative data from the survey were consistent with these findings. Overall, it appeared that participants combined contemporary career attitudes with aspects of the traditional career. They understood the hierarchical opportunities available to them but also favoured innovative new endeavours.

### Acknowledgements

I would first like to my thesis supervisor, Professor Tom Nicholson, and my second supervisor, Terence Edwards, for their advice and contribution toward this study. I would like to express my gratitude to the students and psychologists who participated in the study, without whom this research would not have been possible. I am also grateful for the support of my family and friends, who have made it possible for me to go on this journey.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Contents page.....	iv
List of tables.....	vii
List of appendices.....	viii
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Focus and rationale for the study.....	1
Changing theories of nature and career.....	1
The boundaryless career.....	2
The protean career.....	3
Career adaptability.....	3
The nature of the present study.....	4
Chapter 2 - Literature review.....	6
A new kind of contract.....	7
New definitions of the world of work.....	8
The boundaryless career.....	9
The protean career.....	12
Similarities between protean and boundaryless career orientations.....	15

Career adaptability.....	16
New Zealand context.....	17
Career research on students and psychologists.....	19
The value of the present study.....	19
Research questions.....	19
Chapter 3 – Constructs.....	21
The measure of boundaryless and protean career attitudes.....	21
The measure of career adaptability.....	24
Chapter 4 – Methodology.....	27
Participants.....	27
Selection of research method.....	29
Measures.....	30
Qualitative questions.....	34
Ethics approval, recruitment, and informed consent.....	34
Procedure.....	35
Data analysis method.....	36
Summary of methodology.....	37
Chapter 5 – Results.....	38
Research question 1.....	38

Research question 2.....	42
Qualitative data.....	45
Career plans.....	50
Summary of results.....	52
Chapter 6 – Discussion.....	53
Research question 1.....	54
Research question 2.....	63
Limitations.....	66
Future research.....	67
Conclusions.....	68
References.....	71
Appendices.....	81

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Protean and boundaryless career combinations.....	22
2. Student and psychologist numbers.....	27
3. University of attendance for students.....	28
4. Place of employment for psychologists.....	28
5. Years of employment for psychologists.....	28
6. Protean and boundaryless career scale items.....	32
7. Career adaptability scale items.....	33
8. Student and psychologist scores for boundaryless and protean attitudes.....	39
9. Boundaryless and protean scores compared by psychologists' workplace.....	39
10. Boundaryless and protean scores compared by length of time as a psychologist.....	40
11. Participant results according to the eight profiles of Briscoe and Hall (2006).....	41
12. Student and psychologist adaptability scores.....	43
13. Adaptability scores for Ministry of Education and other psychologists.....	44
14. Adaptability scores for early and late-career psychologists.....	44
15. Question 7: Student and psychologist responses.....	46
16. Question 23: Student and psychologist responses.....	47
17. Question 35: Student and psychologist responses.....	49
18. Respondents' career plans.....	51



## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A. Complete questionnaire.....	81
B. Participant letter.....	90